



**2021**  
**Virtual**  
**Educator Guide**

*My Silence, My Story.*

GLSEN's Day of Silence occurs every April where people in schools across the country engage in direct action through a silent protest to call attention to the silencing and erasure of LGBTQ+ people in schools. **This year, GLSEN's Day of Silence is April 23, 2021.**

We know this is a challenging time to be an educator and GLSEN is in deep gratitude for the continuous efforts of educators advocating for LGBTQ+ inclusion in schools. GLSEN is here to support the needs of educators like you who are committed to taking action, joining in solidarity, and rallying your students to participate virtually in GLSEN's Day of Silence. *As we continue to navigate and adjust to the ongoing challenges of life during the pandemic, GLSEN is here to help provide as much support in your continued advocacy to improve the lives and experiences of your students.*

This year, the Day of Silence theme is My Silence, My Story. Where LGBTQ+ people in schools are often silenced and erased, this direct action is a reclamation of that forced silence and erasure. This time LGBTQ+ students and educators are choosing to be silent on their own accord and demonstrate the impact on the entire school community when LGBTQ+ people are silenced and erased. GLSEN's resources will provide opportunities for student leaders to organize their day of action and engage in creative and impactful ways to tell their story especially in incorporating racial, gender, and disability justice. The purpose of this guide is to help educators like yourself participate and support people on your campus to take action and join this campaign on April 23, 2021.

## PREPARE FOR THE DAY OF SILENCE!

Registrants for the Day of Silence will receive weekly emails leading up to April 23rd to help students and educators plan their Day of Silence and will also update folks taking action of new material and celebrity influencer engagement! Register now to receive these updates!

- **Get familiar** with the resources available for students and educators on the **GLSEN Day of Silence website**.
- **Register** for GLSEN's Day of Silence to receive more information for engagement opportunities with celebrity influencers, giveaways, and resources.
- **Review GLSEN's 2019 National School Climate Survey Report** to learn more about the experiences of LGBTQ+ students including students with disabilities, Black, Indigenous, students of color, and trans including nonbinary students.
- **Connect** with your local **GLSEN Chapter** for support in organizing your event.

**Over 4 in 5 LGBTQ students don't see positive LGBTQ representation in their curriculum, nearly 9 in 10 experience harassment or assault, and almost a third miss school because they feel unsafe or uncomfortable.<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Kosciw, J. G., Greytak, E. A., Zongrone, A. D., Clark, C. M., & Truong, N. L. (2018). *The 2017 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth in our nation's schools*. New York: GLSEN



For more information visit [glsen.org/DayOfSilence](https://glsen.org/DayOfSilence) or email [educators@glsen.org](mailto:educators@glsen.org). Thank you for your continued support and advocacy for LGBTQ+ students.

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- **Decide** and share ahead of time how you will be participating as an educator.
  - Have your students watch the **GLSEN Day of Silence video** that shares the history of how it started, why it is important, and encourage students to participate.
- **Take this time** to audit your class syllabus, policies, bullying prevention and intervention skills and practice. Once you have created a solid plan, share this with your school administration to encourage a more welcoming and inclusive school environment.
- **Review** your curriculum with GLSEN's **LGBTQ-Inclusive Curriculum Guide** and identify ways to break the silence of hidden curriculum by teaching about LGBTQ people and identity.
- **Teach** your students about the history of silent protesting, the silencing of LGBTQ+ people and history, and the reason for participating in the Day of Silence.
- **Send** a letter to your student's families to let them know that the Day of Silence is coming up, and why you and some of your students are participating.
- **Order** copies of our **LGBTQ History Cards** and use the biographies and activity ideas for teaching silently.
- **Encourage** your students to register at [glsen.org/DayOfSilence](https://glsen.org/DayOfSilence).

## PARTICIPATING IN THE DAY OF SILENCE AS AN EDUCATOR

It's tricky to teach silently, but not impossible! Especially if you're able to prepare your students and families before the Day of Silence. Here are a few ways to participate virtually:

- Use GLSEN's **Virtual Student Day of Silence Guide** to plan for virtual participation. Share the guide with your students to see what interests them.
- Download the **Day of Silence Virtual Background**.
- Follow @GLSEN on **Facebook**, **Twitter**, and **Instagram** where we'll be sharing virtual lesson and activity ideas from educators and graphics.
- **Join GLSEN in a National Moment of Silence at 3:00PM ET/12:00PM PT on GLSEN's Instagram @GLSEN**
- Structure your lessons with silent writing: Share the **National Student Council's Day of Silence Zine** and create a writing assignment reflecting on the different offerings in the zine, from history to poetry.
- If you cannot be silent all day, have a moment of silence in your class and use this day to bring LGBTQ+ inclusive curriculum into your classwork.
- **Join GLSEN's National Breaking the Silence Rally** on all of GLSEN's social platforms. We will have special celebrity guests and students joining the rally! The rally starts at 7PM ET/ 4PM PT.



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## SUPPORTING YOUR STUDENTS ON THE DAY OF SILENCE

The Day of Silence is still a school day when learning needs to happen. Be creative with your assignments and activities and methods of participation!

- Support students who choose to remain silent, and intervene if you witness any name-calling or harassment.
- Teach your students about the history of silent protesting, the silencing of LGBTQ+ people and history, and the reason for participating in the Day of Silence.
- Plan a silent reading time where students read or look at social justice picture books and books with LGBTQ and gender-diverse people.
- Have students read GLSEN's **Gender Triangle Education Guide** or teach our **Beyond the Binary** lesson. Have students write about actions they can take to be more inclusive of transgender and gender nonconforming people.
- Have students conduct a silent audit of the classroom library. How many books have LGBTQ+ people or show characters breaking gender stereotypes? Students can tally these and the data can be analyzed in math. Students could then write their own stories to supplement this gap.
- Plan a letter-writing lesson where students write to local state legislators, principals, or other school leaders to ask them to address bullying and support LGBTQ+ students.
- Use sharing time or closing circles to discuss how students help people who are being teased for what they like, how they look, or who they love.
- Hold an all-school assembly and invite families to be silent at 3:00PM ET for 3 min. Then [join GLSEN's National Breaking the Silence Rally](#) on all of GLSEN's social platforms. We will have special celebrity guests and students joining the rally! The rally starts at 7PM ET/ 4PM PT.
  - For elementary folks- have a social justice/LGBTQ+ inclusive Read Aloud, and have students share what actions they will take to stop bullying.

## GSA ADVISORS

- Make sure your **GSA is registered!**
- Having a supportive adult as the main contact in case the students run into any trouble is really helpful and a safety measure.
- Help students prepare for the Day of Silence and a Breaking the Silence event.
- Use GLSEN's **In-Person Student Day of Silence Guide** and the **Breaking the Silence Guide** for ideas.
- Support the students in taking action, planning a virtual gathering, attending the Breaking the Silence event on April 23rd at 7PM ET/3PM PT on any of GLSEN's social channels. Follow GLSEN on **Facebook**, **Twitter**, and **Instagram** for campaign updates.



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## ACCESSIBILITY

As for all advocacy work, make sure that your participation and your students' participation is accessible and does not perpetuate or engage in ableist behavior. Here are suggestions on how to participate with mindfulness and centering access needs.

- If you are planning an in person event, offer all the ways your event will be accessible. For example, offering if the event will have live interpreters, wheelchair accessible, fragrance free for folks sensitive to smells, seating availability prioritized for folks who cannot stand for any length of time or need to be closer to the event for visibility. It is important to center the needs and requests of the folks you are supporting. If an interpreter is needed, ask if they have a preferred interpreter.
- Make a note of who to contact plus contact information if someone has accommodation requests (such as interpreters, live captioning, image descriptions.)
- Some people have light sensitivity so avoid using flashing lights or give a warning if there will be flashing lights at the moment they will happen and give folks a chance to look away. Let folks know when the flashing lights have stopped.
- Use image descriptions for folks who cannot see the image you are promoting or sharing. Here is an example of an image description for a photo. *Image description is of a person with short pastel orange hair in a light blue t-shirt and jeans standing on a stage and passing a microphone to another person with long black hair wearing overalls with flower prints on them.* For more information about why this is important, [check out this list of "Ways to Create Access"](#) from the Disability Accessibility Summit.
- Make sure folks are using correct names and pronouns by having name tags and encouraging students to add their pronouns.
- Share content warnings for heavy topics such as mental health, death, violence, slurs, etc. should they be mentioned or discussed.
- Invite students to move up to the front but do not force or pressure them. For some students, it may have taken a lot for some students to get through the door, let folks be where they are most comfortable and feel the safest.
- This is the Day of Silence. What this means for hearing folks is using American Sign Language (ASL) or making up gestures like scatergories should not be "entertaining", funny, or used as a substitution for you not speaking. American Sign Language is a complex and effective language of communication for Deaf and hard of hearing communities. It is ableist and offensive to try and make up gestures to communicate. If you or your peers need to communicate, using the chat feature is the best practice.

## ACTIONS TO TAKE AFTER GLSEN'S DAY OF SILENCE

- Get involved: Contact principals, superintendents, and state legislators to demand that they show visible support for LGBTQ+ youth. Stay connected by signing up for our Educator Network at [glsen.org/educators](https://glsen.org/educators).
- GLSEN's National School Climate Survey is launching after the Breaking the Silence Rally. Encourage your students to share their story by taking this survey. Every other year this groundbreaking survey helps center LGBTQ+



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student experiences at school. Over the past 20 years this survey has contributed to helping LGBTQ+ affirming bills pass, has helped defend and defeat negative bills targeting LGBTQ+ students, and has helped build stronger enumerated policies in school districts across the country.

- Use this activity to encourage students to dream and use a vision board to capture what safe schools mean. Use this **#SafeToBe Vision Board** activity to guide questions and students can identify safety and liberation with and through their education.
- If you did not have the time to review your class syllabus or school policies, form a task force or coalition at your school to review and advocate for LGBTQ+ inclusion, work towards becoming an anti racist school, center the needs of Disabled students/ students with disabilities, use an intersectional framework in learning how to support students holding multiple identities that are oppressed.
- Continue the conversation! The Day of Silence should not be the only time you discuss LGBTQ+ individuals in the classroom. Break the silence of hidden curriculum by using our **Inclusive Curriculum Guide** and adding LGBTQ+ people, themes, and events into lesson plans you are already teaching.



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